

The University of Chicago

GENERAL BENJAMIN F. BUTLER
AND THE CAMPAIGN OF 1868

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

1936

By

LOUIS TAYLOR MERRILL

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE FEUD WITH GRANT

On May 16, 1868, doom of the Radical effort to remove President Andrew Johnson by impeachment was practically determined by failure to muster a two-thirds majority vote in the Senate on the Eleventh impeachment article. Five days later at Chicago the Republican National Convention practically assured the somewhat more delayed removal of Johnson by nominating General Ulysses S. Grant for the Presidency.

Grant's nomination, portending almost certain victory at the polls, cushioned the crash of Radical impeachment hopes. But it merely deepened the discomfiture and embarrassment for the Radical leader who had been the most conspicuous figure in the impeachment effort.

By refusing an invitation from Lincoln to be his running-mate in 1864, Major General Benjamin F. Butler of Massachusetts had missed the chance to become President when John Wilkes Booth's last act as a tragedian in Ford's Theater on April 14, 1865, opened the fateful drama of Radical reconstruction.

Frustration had met Butler's efforts to be included in Johnson's cabinet. However, securing election in 1866 to the Fortieth Congress from the Fifth Massachusetts District, in which, incidentally, he did not reside, Butler had vigorously forged to the front as an influential figure in the House, regarded by many as the political heir-apparent of Thaddeus Stevens.

The failure of impeachment, for which he had energetically striven, was a blow to Butler's prestige. The nomination of Grant loomed as an even more serious threat to his political future. For it meant the elevation to national leadership of the man who above all others in the party Butler bitterly regarded as a personal foe and as the one responsible for blasting his military reputation.

Nursing a sense of injury that made him hate Grant more than Johnson, Butler vainly sought to thwart Grant's presidential prospects. For three years, since the ending of the war, Butler's

public utterances had carried severe criticisms of the general-in-chief, while behind the scenes he neglected no opportunity to undermine and discredit Grant politically--a fact that came to be well known to Grant and that led him to countenance and encourage reprisals.

Butler regarded his dismissal from active military command in January, 1865, at the instance of Grant, as a personal affront, and Grant's official report on Butler's military operations fanned the flames of his hatred, besides rendering keener his life-long antipathy for West Point officers and the West Point spirit that he felt had perniciously operated against him throughout his war service.

His farewell order to his troops betrayed so much feeling on this point that it was criticized as a piece of insubordination and one Cincinnati editor "questioned whether he should not be shot for it."¹ Likewise he was free in publicly venting his feelings upon his return to Lowell, so that one New England editor thought he showed himself "disloyal." "Clap him into Fort Warren!" demanded the Nashua Gazette.² He had plenty of friends, however, who took his side in these matters and urged him to press for justification and reparation.

Early in 1866 Butler felt Grant had added insult to injury by sending him an eleventh-hour invitation to a reception. Interpreting it as a calculated slight, he returned the invitation with the curt notation: "General Butler has the honor to decline the invitation of Lieutenant General Grant. General Butler has now no desire for further acquaintance."³

"Grant is a rascal," wrote Butler to a correspondent who thought he had been used roughly in Grant's military report. "My turn will come sometime."⁴ "I never forget nor forgive until reparation is made, and in Grant's case it can never be," he wrote another friend.⁵

¹Cincinnati Commercial, quoted in Cincinnati Gazette, January 18, 1865.

²Quoted in Lowell Courier, February 2, 1865.

³Butler to Grant, January 29, 1866, Butler MSS (Library of Congress).

⁴Butler to Godfrey Weitzel, May 10, 1866, in Butler MSS.

⁵Butler to Rush C. Hawkins, May 1, 1866, in Butler MSS.

Butler busied himself writing a book justifying his military career, and according to reports, sharply attacking Grant's conduct of the war. It got to the stage of being put into type and stereotyped, but was never issued, and all traces of it have been destroyed. James Parton, author of Butler at New Orleans, helped with the new book. To Parton and others who kept urging that he hurry to bring it out, Butler continued to reply that the time was inexpedient, that with Grant being courted politically by both sides, his book would not get a fair hearing from either.⁶

"Do you think the people will hear me now?" he demanded of an interviewer. "The people are deceived about him [Grant] now, because Washburne has wound him up and set him a-running on the right track, but that can't last long because he is a West Pointer." Johnson was a better man for President, he continued, because at least he had strong convictions "while Grant is putty and would be clay in the hands of the potter, and it would be a copperhead potter that would mould him. As soon as he is elected Washburne will not be able to wind him up; but West Point will do it, and Congress will be obliged to bind him tighter than they have Johnson."⁷

These expressions give confirmation to Seward's opinion early in 1867 that Butler's animosity was greater toward Grant than toward Johnson.⁸ Contemptuously he was saying the election would show whether there was any difference "between a drunken tailor and a drunken tanner."⁹ The Republican party, he feared, was again going to make the mistake that was made with Johnson, "nominate a man for supposed availability without knowing his principles or fitness." Grant's election, he held, would be a "misfortune because it will put in power a man without a head or heart, indifferent to human suffering and impotent to govern."¹⁰

⁶Parton to Butler, February 19, 1867; Butler to Col. J. L. Cunningham, December, 1866, in Butler MSS.

⁷Manuscript interview with Butler, March, 1867, by E.P.B., in Butler MSS. There is no indication of whether it was ever printed.

⁸Gideon Welles, Diary (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), III, 57.

⁹Gen. George A. Gordon to Washburne, August 27, 1866, in Washburne MSS.

¹⁰Butler to W. Jones, August 25, 1867, in Butler MSS.

As the year 1867 neared its close, Massachusetts advisers who had been hoping to get a Butler presidential band-wagon rolling in New England with the idea that it would pick up many passengers in the West, gave up that hope and began warning Butler that he had better climb aboard the Grant band-wagon or his chances of returning to Congress would be jeopardized.¹¹ "They are organizing a campaign against you already," reported Sherman, his Lawrence observer. "They think with the strong feeling in favor of Grant, with you opposed to him, they can defeat you." Some were saying, "General Butler knew better than to even ask for a renomination."¹² Replying to this warning, Butler said he had decided to support Grant, if he were nominated on a platform upholding negro suffrage and if he would come out against the bondholders; but "if the candidate of the bondholders, he cannot be elected and I won't vote for him."¹³

Sherman a little later took heart and urged revival of the idea of organizing Butler-for-President clubs, on the suffrage and greenback issues. "The fact that such clubs are being formed all over the country will cause a rattling among the dry bones," he thought. Such a movement would rally not only the Greenbackers and anti-Grant Radicals but perhaps also "the old Jackson Democrats who are not coppery." If it had no other positive effect, it would at least, Sherman thought, frighten the Grant backers into putting him "onto a Radical platform."¹⁴ The movement got under way in some sections, with Butler's tacit sanction, but never grew to any great strength.¹⁵

To some Democrats who reproached him for ever having left their party, Butler admitted the uncomfortableness of his position. "The truth is," he wrote an Illinois correspondent, "that the conservative part of our party are the high tariff, national bank and gold payment for paper bonds and high taxes part of the machine, with which I have as little fellowship as I have with that

¹¹E. J. Sherman to Butler, June 15, December 6, 1867, in Butler MSS.

¹²Sherman to Butler, December 26, 1867, in Butler MSS.

¹³Butler to Sherman, December 27, 1867; Butler to Judge Thomas Russell, December 16, 1867, in Butler MSS.

¹⁴Sherman to Butler, January 8, 1868, in Butler MSS.

¹⁵Butler to J. G. Culbertson, May 11, 1868, in Butler MSS.

Democracy that will not give a negro his rights because they believe themselves his superior in race.¹⁶ "You say I have followed strange gods since I left the Democratic party," he wrote a Pennsylvanian. "Very likely so, but that party since I left it has not followed any God at all but has gone straight to the devil. . . . If you choose to go with them I can only say good-bye."¹⁷

Butler by the end of February had fully made up his mind where he was going. He was going to string along with Grant. "I think Grant will stagger into the White House," he wrote Mrs. James Parton. "To this complexion have we come at last."¹⁸ Grant's support of impeachment had firmly attached him to the Radical cause and made Butler's opposition to him more difficult. The failure of impeachment subjected the Massachusetts man to renewed urgency from party leaders to bury personal feelings for the sake of party solidarity. "We must shoot the deserters, beginning with Chase," Young wrote him. "Before we go into the campaign we must restore discipline. Heal up all dissensions but the one dissension. Let us rally around Grant and take possession of him. He has done well in this emergency."¹⁹

Butler's dish of crow was made all the more unpalatable in that the Chicago convention, besides nominating Grant, put a ringing declaration for hard money into the national platform. Replying to an Ohioan who said the situation had put the Western Greenback Republicans in a quandary so that they did not know how to vote, Butler wrote:

The inconsistency between the Chicago platform on the subject of finance and the true theory of relieving the burdens of the people from the claims of the bondholders to be paid in gold is painfully evident, and if that were the only issue before the soldiers and the Republicans I could not support the platform. But suppose I do not do so for the reason assigned by you, what then? The rebels whom we have fought, the copperheads who fought us will come into power, undo all we have done in the field and in Congress and the lives of our comrades will have been spent in vain.

¹⁶ Butler to M. C. Johnson, January 15, 1868, in Butler MSS.

¹⁷ Butler to D. C. Campbell, February 22, 1868, in Butler MSS.

¹⁸ Butler to Mrs. James Parton, February 10, 1868, in Butler MSS.

¹⁹ John Russell Young to Butler, May 17, 1868, in Butler MSS.

Greenback Republicans had better vote the party ticket, he advised, and try afterwards to bring the party around to their views on finance. "I do not like the political complexion of the times better than you do," he confessed, "but swallowing my personal feelings, I mean to strike one more good blow for country and the cause."²⁰

Having decided to support the Grant ticket and try to ride back into office with its aid, Butler was under an obvious embarrassment in not even being on speaking terms with the candidate, and having the entire press hostile to his own candidacy aware of the full details of the personal feud. It was time for peace-making and the intervention of peace-makers.

Butler ventured an obliquely directed overture in April. A San Francisco woman had written him as an attorney asking him to assume collection, on a percentage basis, of \$1,000 she alleged Grant had been owing her for more than a year, adding if he did not pay "much scandal may be the result of the manner in which he is treating me."²¹ Instead of assuming this commission, Butler "respectfully referred" a copy of her letter to Grant, noting, "It would seem to be some attempt to 'blackmail' which follows gentlemen of position." Friendly as this overture was designed to be, it may have seemed a bit clumsy, in view of the fact that Grant well knew Butler had had detectives shadowing him now many months previously with the purpose, as his friends alleged, of trying to blacken his personal reputation.

At about the same time, George Wilkes, Radical editor of the Spirit of the Times, who was associated with Butler in a Lower California development company and who was also a friend of Grant, tried his hand as a volunteer mediator. Grant was at first reluctant to converse on the subject when Wilkes approached him, but finally was persuaded to make a statement for Wilkes to transmit to Butler. Regarding the phrase in his official report about Butler being "bottled up" at Bermuda Hundred, Grant said it had "not been originated by him or adopted in the way of disrespect." He had borrowed the phraseology from a conversation in which General Barnard of the Engineers had used it "by way of illustration merely." Grant said he had used it in his report

²⁰Butler to J. C. Thorp, June 19, 1868, in Butler MSS.

²¹Mrs. Mary B. Fox to Butler, April 1, 1868, in Butler MSS.

"simply because it was apt and on his mind, but without the slightest thought of reflecting on General Butler." As to the belated invitation to the Grant soirée, it was explained Grant had not known when the original invitations were sent out that Butler was in town but dispatched one as soon as he learned of the presence of General and Mrs. Butler in Washington.²²

Butler waited two weeks before replying to the Wilkes letter. Then he wrote that he agreed that positions of himself and Grant in the party and in public life "would seem to render it convenient, at least, that no impediment should exist to social recognition each of the other even if supposed or real grievances to either, unexplained, or unredressed, should forbid more." In light of Grant's explanation about the belated invitation, Butler offered to withdraw his curt reply "so that all cause of social offence may be at an end." Regarding the "bottled up" phrase in Grant's report, Butler agreed that it did not originate with Grant. Indeed, he declared,

On the 27th day of May, 1864, long before General Grant's report, at my own head-quarters I applied the same epithet to my position and it was published in correspondence from thence in the *New York Times* a day or two after. . . . The position was indeed 'a bottle' of refreshment to the Army of the Potomac when it got there as it was intended to be, furnishing that Army with supplies of subsistence, ammunition and forage

"If other supposed injustice done me in his Report can be as easily elucidated as this," he continued, "there can be no reason why the most cordial relations should not be resumed between us, as I do not hold this phrase as needing any explanation, as only the ignorance of the newspaper critics who seized upon it ever made it appear invidious." If General Grant would make known his desire to explain "other matters of difference," in the report, "wherein I think he has done injustice," Butler concluded, "he saw no difficulty in the way of 'mutual satisfactory explanations.'" But he refused to be put in the position of seeking such explanations. He wanted the initiative to come from Grant.²³

Here the matter hung fire for a month and a half, with Grant apparently apathetic to success of Wilkes' diplomacy, though Wilkes promptly sent a copy of Butler's letter to him on May 5.

²²Wilkes to Butler, April 12, 1868, in Butler MSS.

²³Butler to Wilkes, May 2, 1868, in Butler MSS.

Finally on June 19 Grant was persuaded to write another letter for Wilkes to show Butler. In it he said he would accept the withdrawal of Butler's angry reply to his invitation. But "in regard to other matters in my report of the operations of the armies for the last year of the war to which General Butler alludes, I must decline to open discussion." This, he added, "does not debar him or any other officer who feels himself aggrieved from making such written response as he or they may think necessary to their proper vindication."²⁴

This hardly made the "plaster big enough to fit the wound," in the language of Butler's friends. And the fact that the whole details of the negotiation leaked into the newspapers spoiled Butler's chance for a graceful acceptance of Grant's terms. Wilkes showed the correspondence to Colfax, Grant's running-mate on the national ticket, and besought his intercession. Colfax, in a letter designed for Butler's attention, wrote Wilkes he hoped Butler would accept Grant's terms, for he would not be likely to offer any better ones--and might withdraw the letter he had written to Wilkes if he understood it was unsatisfactory to Butler.²⁵

Here the whole matter stalled for some time, in spite of newspaper reports that a complete reconciliation had been consummated. To a New Hampshire correspondent who wrote Butler congratulations on prospects of his being appointed to head Grant's cabinet, the Essex member replied that the reports of an understanding were incorrect, that Wilkes' efforts had "failed wholly for the reason that Grant's note on the subject renders further action of mine wholly impossible." His friends to whom he had shown the letter

say that I can do nothing and that I am justified in doing just that. General Grant thinks his great name and deeds will carry him into the presidency without the aid of little men like myself. He forgets the fable of the mouse and the lion.²⁶

He went on in a mood of gloomy foreboding:

There is to be an election of President in which neither candidate represents or will carry out the earnest wishes and

²⁴Grant to Wilkes, June 19, 1868, in Butler MSS.

²⁵Colfax to Wilkes and Wilkes to Butler, June 20, 1868, in Butler MSS.

²⁶Butler to N. G. Upham, July 8, 1868, in Butler MSS.

principles of the great party of progress, freedom and equality of right. If we succeed we shall be cheated. If we fail, we shall be overwhelmed. If the Republicans elect Grant, then Conservatism, West Pointism, regular navyism, a general in the war department and an admiral in the navy department will change the civil form of our government to one of military order. He is too weak to prevent it. He will be the victim if not the tool of his army and family associates who are all anything but Republican. The Radical hard-working and earnest lover of his country who has toiled through the war and hoped and prayed for the advancement of civil liberty will be disappointed and soured by Grant's administration which will have no more bitter opponents than they will be before the end of the second year. The other side I need not picture. All know that. What is there for me, for you or any other true Radical Republican to labor for in the coming election simply to 'win a loss'? . . . All that can be done is to endeavor to save the country from intense Copperheadism (we shall not save it from conservatism by the election of Grant) nor endeavor to keep what of advance the war had brought us.

Butler concluded the Democrats would nominate a moderate, so that there would be little choice in the campaign as to men and measures. "I therefore feel myself out of place in the canvass and shall take but little if any part in it as at present advised unless a change shall come over the counsels of those who are our leaders."²⁷

The law of political self-preservation was soon to force Butler to abandon these resolutions of remaining aloof from the Grant campaign, but this mid-Summer confidential utterance offers intimate reflection of his mood and attitude toward the campaign.

²⁷ Butler to N. G. Upham, July 8, 1868, in Butler MSS.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CAMPAIGN OF 1868

Within less than a month after expressing his saturnine forebodings on the evil consequences sure to follow Grant's election, Butler had renounced his determination to remain aloof from the canvass and was aggressively campaigning for Grant and Colfax.

Responding to an inquiry from the editor of the Peabody Press, in his district, as to whether he would run for Congress again, he said he would be "proud of such a mark of confidence" if the people wanted to re-elect him. The immediate future, he thought, would be "most perilous . . . and I look to the Republican party to carry the country through this peril as it has brought us through the war, only with greater energy, vigor and promptness."¹

A few days later, addressing a "ratification meeting" of the newly formed Gloucester Grant and Colfax Club, he stoutly denied insinuations that he would bolt the Grant-Colfax ticket "because of personal differences upon military questions." "These slanders mistake their man," said he. He had marched away among the first of the Essex men when the war began. He would still "march on with the men of Essex and Massachusetts, fighting the enemies of my country whenever and wherever found." He denied that any "bargain . . . alike disgraceful to both of us" had been patched up with Grant. "A difference in social life" merely had been the subject of "mutually satisfactory explanation--no more, no less."²

"I shall advocate the election of General Grant," he declared, "as the man selected by the party, whose patriotism, energy and success at the head of the armies of the United States

¹Butler to Charles D. Howard, July 26, 1868, reprinted in Lowell Citizen and News, August 8, 1868.

²Ibid., August 10, 1868.

in destroying the rebellion in arms gives satisfactory assurance that he will be able, at the head of the Government, to resist this new phase of the rebellion transferred to civil life; and his administration, devoted to such a patriotic work, shall have the same cordial and hearty support from me that it would have were he my dearest friend." He could not "desert or falter now." The issue was made up--"loyalty on the one side, rebellion and treason on the other. No true man can hesitate."

Butler had hesitated. But having made up his mind where expediency demanded that he go, he plunged. Within a few weeks after writing that he could see no difference in the merits of the two party tickets he was viewing with alarm the "fatal effect" of the election of Seymour and Blair, under whom "a new rebellion will be inaugurated in which God help the country and the people."³ And from predicting a triumph of "West Pointism" and subversion of civil government under Grant, he was soon writing another correspondent,

As to your fears lest the Government may degenerate into a military despotism, I do not agree. When our army disbanded at the close of the war without shock to the country we demonstrated that there was no danger that the military would not be subordinate to the civil power.⁴

He hurried to contribute a substantial sum to the Grant-Colfax election fund and to respond to invitations to help with the national campaign in other States.

Probably not merely a realization that he would have to swim with the national ticket or sink produced this volte face. Blair's intemperate utterances were calculated to fan the Radical fire in the Essex member and set him waving the bloody shirt with other leaders of the party, despite his disappointments on the money question and choice of Grant to head the ticket. Called upon for a speech at the Republican State convention at Worcester, Butler rapped Blair's position as a threat that the reconstruction measures already adopted would be violently set aside.⁵ Incidentally, he withdrew his name from consideration of the convention as a candidate for Governor and moved the nomination by

³Butler to Hawkins Taylor, August 15, 1868, in Butler MSS.

⁴Butler to Robie Marston, August 15, 1868, in Butler MSS.

⁵Boston Advertiser, September 10, 1868.

acclamation of William Claflin.⁶

Next day at a flag-raising rally in Lowell he defined the issue as Grant and peace--"but if we choose the platform of the Democrats, there will be war."⁷ A victory for the Democrats would mean setting aside the reconstruction acts of Congress with the bayonet, he told a Salem rally a week later. Grant, who had dealt with the rebels without anger, as if they had erred but not sinned, would give the nation peace. But if the South still wanted war, they could have such a war as they had never seen. The men who had been soldiers once could be so again, and they would not leave anything behind them to hatch treason.⁸

All this rhetorical show of patriotism did not placate the hard money faction in the State who were out to beat Butler because of his soft money activities and bond-taxing efforts in Congress. The Massachusetts State Republican convention had followed the example of the national convention in adopting an uncompromising hard money stand. This put an additional club into the hands of Butler's foes, and lustily they belabored him. Boston papers led the attack with declarations that his stand on the currency question had been equivocal, unsatisfactory and out of line with the emphatically adopted position of his party.⁹ Friends warned him that his financial views would prove a serious obstacle to his campaign and that his old foe, General Schouler, probably would enter the lists against him.

"Having very decided views of the best interests of the country in the matters of finance, I cannot let them go even to win an election," Butler replied to one such warning.¹⁰ But he attempted a placatory elucidation of his position in a speech at Newburyport a few days later. He was a bond-holder himself, he said, and his plan was in the interest of the bond-holders. If the national debt was to be paid, it must be paid in the same currency other debts were being paid in. But the paramount issue

⁶Lowell Citizen and News, September 10, 1868.

⁷Ibid., September 11, 1868.

⁸Boston Journal, September 17, 1868.

⁹Boston Advertiser, September 18, 1868.

¹⁰Butler to Charles Winslow, September 19, 1868, in Butler MSS.

was saving the country from renewed war, which if it came would mean "you'll get neither the interest nor the principal." Let this difference of opinion about financial policy be subordinated for the present, he urged, and "get the ship off the rocks before you quarrel about the course you are to sail."¹¹

But his hard money foes were not going to let the issue, or Butler, rest. Realizing he would be renominated at the regular Fifth District convention, they put out a call for a rival convention, to the hearty applause of the hard money press in Boston and New York.¹²

Butler's nomination came off without a hitch at the regular convention in Salem, by a vote of 175 to 4. He seized the occasion to make a speech castigating his foes. All the rebel hosts, living and dead, would be at that rival convention, if they could, he said. Those who signed the call for it were like the rebels who seceded from the Union before Lincoln had done anything. They were making pretended opposition to his financial views the "stalking horse to bear off personal ambition and personal ill-will" and thus draw good and true men away from their party allegiance.¹³

"I have nowhere said or thought," he declared, "that the Government should not pay those legal tenders in gold as soon as the prosperity and growth of the resources of the country will permit without commercial distress, financial revulsion and the disorganization of the labor and business of the country." This question was daily becoming of less importance, he declared. Times were improving. The national debt would soon easily be paid off. Butler offered to withdraw his candidacy if Grant, or Colfax or his Massachusetts colleagues in Congress would say the district would be better served by someone else. But in lieu of such word from them he would persist in the race. He had heard rumors that \$40,000 was being raised to defeat him.¹⁴ But "fifty

¹¹Newburyport Herald, reprinted in New York Times, September 28, 1868.

¹²New York Times, September 24, 25, 1868.

¹³Boston Advertiser, September 29, 1868.

¹⁴Actual expenses of the Dana campaign were about \$4,000 instead of \$40,000, according to testimony of the secretary of the campaign committee. Though building up their attack against

millions cannot swerve the Republicans of this district from their principles or buy them to slaughter a tried public servant."

After his nomination he presented resolutions which were unanimously adopted. On the money question they offered a general promise to "the public creditor that he shall receive his own again with interest, not only according to the letter but the spirit of the laws under which the contracts were made."¹⁵ These resolutions were "weasel-worded enough" to give Butler a "free charter" for the rest of the canvass to construe the national and state platforms as he pleased, complained the Boston Advertiser, loudest and most insistent of his hard-money editorial critics, and others chimed in in similar key.¹⁶

Delegates to the anti-Butler convention, 300 strong, met at Salem with A. A. Abbott of Peabody in the chair. Denouncing Butler as a "pseudo-Republican," the chairman polished off his character in a shower of adjectives:

Self-willed, arrogant, headstrong and domineering, of violent temper and bitter hatreds, intractable, implacable and un-conciliatory, his governing passion seems to be either to 'rule or ruin.' A friend if you submit, an enemy if you resist; unyielding, bold, bent upon his own way at all hazards; artful, adroit, in private life not without generous qualities, but in public life knowing no scruples; of great abilities, keen wit and faculties all sharpened and acute, but abusive and vulgar in speech, vindictive, not troubled by modesty and devoid of moral sensibilities.¹⁷

But the tenor of the convention's resolutions made plain it was not Butler's personal qualities which irked his opponents so much as the fact that his soft money position and his proposal to put a 10 per cent coupon tax on Federal bonds twitched the pocket-book nerves of the bond-holders. Roundly the resolutions denounced Butler's money stand as "repudiation" and "breach of contract" and a trifling with the national honor. Of course, there was thrown in the added allegation that Butler's "bitter personal enmity towards General Grant" made him a poor repre-

Butler as a repudiator and an exponent of bad faith in financial matters, the anti-Butlerites never paid a good portion of the debt they incurred in the campaign.--Affidavit of W. W. Lander, September 15, 1870, in Butler MSS.

¹⁵ Lowell Citizen and News, September 29, 1868.

¹⁶ Boston Advertiser, September 29, 30, 1868.

¹⁷ Ibid., October 6, 1868.

sentative of the party and should disqualify him.¹⁸

The same committee that drew up the resolutions reported out the only nomination made and, according to preconceived plan, Richard Henry Dana was named Butler's opponent by acclamation. The nominee, in keeping with the spirit of the gathering, delivered a long speech further attacking Butler's financial views. The convention was closed with remarks by George W. Mudge of Lynn, who characterized Butler as a barnacle on the ship of state. "We propose to have her bottom scraped before she founders," he declared.

He went on to criticize Butler as an interloper who did not reside in the district. But this line of attack necessarily had something of a pot-and-kettle flavor, in view of the fact that Dana, who had been serving in the Massachusetts General Assembly as a representative of Cambridge, outside the Essex district, was as much a carpetbagger as Butler, though both of them owned Essex district real estate.¹⁹

In Dana the bolters' convention presented a figure representative of the Butler opposition, a gentleman of eminent gentility, with a consistent anti-slavery record but no war service--he had been a United States district attorney while Butler was serving in the army. His main qualification, of course, was that he was "orthodox" on the financial question. But as a stiff-necked, conservative Brahmin and blue-blood, Dana was singularly ill-matched to battle such a fiery commoner as Butler. The Boston Advertiser editorially praised the conduct of the Dana convention, in having preserved its dignity and not having "descended into the muddy arena where its members have been so persistently invited."²⁰ Too much dignity, too much aloofness from the "muddy arena" were necessarily fatal to an antagonist pitting himself against Butler. The General promptly dubbed his opponent the

¹⁸Lowell Citizen and News, October 6, 1868.

¹⁹Taking Dana at his word that he was a resident of the Essex district, the Cambridge election officials struck him off their polling list. Whereupon Dana, after the election, filed a \$5,000 damage suit against the Cambridge mayor and aldermen. When papers in the suit were served at a council meeting, it was proposed to engage Butler as an attorney to defend the cause. But Dana withdrew his suit before it could come to trial.--Ibid., December 19, 1868; June 9, 1869.

²⁰Boston Advertiser, October 6, 1868.

"kid glove candidate" and went up and down the district successfully rubbing in the impression of Dana's aristocratic manners and habits. Dana admitted to his prospective constituents that he wore white kid gloves for social purposes, but recalling his experiences in youth as a sailor (which he had recounted in his Two Years Before the Mast) he told them that was decidedly not white kid glove work. Indeed, then, "I assure you, fellow citizens, I was as dirty as any of you"--a doubtful compliment to his listeners.²¹

Butler made the most of such slips and continued to satirize his opponent as a "silk stocking and cocked hat aristocrat." He professed to be surprised that from such genteel sources so much dirt should be hurled in his direction when he had supposed, judging from the claims of these "gentlemen bolters to aristocracy and kid-gloveism generally that the contest was to be carried on in so gracious a manner that I would only be sprinkled with eau de cologne or at worst drowned in diluted rose water."²²

Sam Ward, who had been roughly dealt with by the Essex Congressman in the impeachment investigation, wired Edward Atkinson, a Boston merchant active in the Dana campaign, an abusive bit of verse describing Butler as "the Great Unscrupulous"

Whose friends and foes alike despise,
Whose soul squints through his devious eyes
In which, and in his face, you see
The devil's likeliest effigy.

A friendly telegraph operator supplied Butler with a copy of the stanza and he recited it from the platform with boomerang effect as a sample of the personal abuse resorted to by his genteel opponents.²³

Pens of the Butler laureates soon were busy, and Butler marchers paraded singing The Essex Cause, of which the following was the first of nine stanzas:

Ho, mariners from the rock-bound coast!
Ho, farm hands from the field!
Ho, men of the trades whose sturdy host
Supports the country's shield,
Ho, every man of each laboring clan,

²¹Dana speech at Lynn, quoted in Butler's Book--Autobiography and Personal Reminiscences (Boston: A. M. Thayer & Co., 1892), pp. 921-22.

²²Butler speech at Salem, October 22, 1868, in Butler MSS.

²³Boston Advertiser, October 3, 1868.

To your craft and cause be true;
Your champion fights for equal rights
And equal burdens, too!²⁴

They had another campaign ballad, sung to the tune of
Bonnie Dundee, thus deriding the Dana forces:

To the Salem convention, 'twas Dana that spoke,
'There are taxes to pay, or the banks will be broke;
So let each millionaire who loves money and me
Deposit his vote for myself as M.C.

Come, fill up my purse; come, bring up my men;
Count out your ballots--vote frequently then;
Open your check-books--let money flow free;
Hurrah for the Bond-holders!' Dana, says he.

The chiefs of the canvass, they've greenbacks and gold,
And the masses, they think, can be bought and be sold;
But they'll find that their gold is as dust in our way,
When the bugles of Butler shall sound reveille.

• Come, fill up my purse, [etc.]²⁵

The Dana forces perceived that the campaign was going badly. Their editors were moved to intensified abuse of Butler. Before the end of October some of his foes were conceding him victory. There was talk of Judge Otis P. Lord, the Democratic candidate, withdrawing in favor of Dana. But whether he did or not would make little difference, for "Butler will be re-elected by a very large majority of all the votes polled," wrote a correspondent of the anti-Butler New York Times, sizing up the campaign from Salem.²⁶ This would not have been so under the old dispensation "when men and things maintained their proper level and demagogues like Ben Butler kept their true place in the Democratic party," complained a Times correspondent in a dispatch from Peabody. "But the great upheaval of the war disjointed and displaced many things, and among the worst effects in Massachusetts was the transformation of the unscrupulous lawyer of Lowell into a champion of Republican principles," who had defiled the campaign stream with "demagogueism, personalities, usurpation and buffoonery."²⁷

In a last attempt to stem the Butler tide of victory, two hostile generals were sent charging into the fray. General George H. Gordon, whose animosity dated from personal differences during the war, stumped the district reviving the old charges of pecula-

²⁴Copy in Butler MSS. ²⁵Copy in Butler MSS.

²⁶New York Times, October 23, 1868.

²⁷Ibid., October 27, 1868.

lation in war supplies. Butler during the war, Gordon declared, had been "toying with human vultures, seeking in a hell-born traffic the tempter's gold." "Dead to the cries of his country's mourners, indifferent to the prolongation of the contest, he allowed a traffic which supplied the rebel enemy with subsistence and prolonged the contest." Supplies got through to Lee through efforts of a "ring" of traders, of which Butler's brother-in-law, Hildreth, was chief manager, Gordon charged.²⁸

The second raiding general sent into the Essex district was the energetic cavalry commander, Kilpatrick, who specialized in giving patriotic lectures before G.A.R. posts at \$150 apiece and who had come home from his diplomatic post as minister to Chili to lend his oratorical talents to the Grant campaign. Grant's benediction and the promise of a thousand dollars for his efforts sent him dashing and slashing into the campaign against Butler after he previously had told the latter he would be unable to speak in his behalf because all his time was pledged to the Republican National Committee.²⁹

"We are fighting the Democratic party plus Benjamin F. Butler," Kilpatrick declaimed. Democrats and rebels had found in Butler "a bold, able and unscrupulous ally." He was "in league with the Vallandighams, the Pendletons, Wade Hampton and the butcher Forrest." He had known of Jeff Davis's treasonable intents when he voted for him fifty-three [sic] times at the Democratic convention at Charleston in 1860. Essex voters might as well elect Davis as Butler to Congress.³⁰

Moreover, Kilpatrick continued, Butler was the bitter personal foe of General Grant. He had tried to spread stories all over the capital about Grant being a drunkard. Butler had attacked Major W. W. Lander, the Salem postmaster, who was secretary of the Dana committee. If Lander lost his postmastership, Grant would come all the way to Salem to see justice done. Even if Butler were elected, he would not get from Grant the disposal of patronage for a single office in the district, Kilpatrick declared.

²⁸Salem speech, October 16, 1868, Boston Advertiser, October 17, 1868.

²⁹Deposition of W. W. Lander, September 15, 1870, in Butler MSS.

³⁰Kilpatrick speech at Salem, October 27, 1868, Boston Advertiser, October 28, 1868.

"I know what I say, gentlemen; I would not be here if I did not." He challenged Butler to try to get a word of indorsement from Grant, Washburne, Rawlins, Schenck, Garfield, Blaine, Sumner, Wilson or Claflin whom Butler had put in nomination for Governor of Massachusetts.

Kilpatrick did know whereof he spoke, for he spoke as the direct emissary of those closest to Grant. Lander, who eventually switched back to support of Butler, some months later revealed the whole story of the Kilpatrick raid. Lander and General Vickers, Kilpatrick's brother-in-law, were dispatched to Galena to see whether Grant would approve the foray. There "General Rawlins assured us that as the confidential friend of General Grant he entirely favored General Kilpatrick going."³¹ Lander and Vickers demanded a pledge that the Grant administration would not let Butler make reprisals against Lander and Kilpatrick. "General Rawlins unhesitatingly pledged . . . that any course which we or anyone else took in opposition to you [Butler] should not prejudice or injure us in any way with the incoming administration." Rawlins also promised to send important documents in Grant's possession for General Gordon to use against Butler in the campaign.

Then the emissaries sought out Grant personally. They found him and several members of his staff seated around the stove in a store. "Although he did not speak directly to the subject of our visit," Lander records, "General Grant gave us to understand that he knew it, by denouncing General Butler and expressing his pleasure at hearing particularly from our district."

"Grant," the Lander deposition continues, denounced you [Butler] in as strong language as was ever used in the campaign, furnished me with important facts to use against you, declared that he had endeavored to disgrace you when he sent you from the army, and that he would have done so months before he did except that there was a personal quarrel involving General Franklin and Baldy Smith. General Grant read me an article from a western newspaper against you; and requested that I should send to General Rawlins a copy of General Gordon's speech. . . . General Grant spoke of his position as a candidate, how guarded he had been in his conversation, that of course it was not proper that he should be publicly meddling in the Fifth Massachusetts district; but that he regarded you as his enemy, and could not understand how anyone who regarded himself a friend of his, could support General Butler. He alluded to his relieving

³¹Lander deposition in Butler MSS.

you at Norfolk and putting Gordon in your place; and sent a personal remembrance to General Gordon.

On the homeward journey Lander and Vickers traveled from Galena to Freeport in company with Grant's intimate friend and adviser, Elihu B. Washburne, "who was very enthusiastic denouncing Butler in unmeasured terms, and on leaving us at Freeport sending a godspeed to General Kilpatrick."

The Republican leaders were playing a double-dealing game at Butler's expense. He had heeded their appeals to help the national speech-making campaign in other states, while they were clandestinely levying war against him in his home district. Butler had more than an inkling of what was up. When W.E. Chandler, secretary of the Republican National Committee, who in later years became one of Butler's close associates in business as well as politics, asked the General to redeem his promise to come to speak for the Grant-Colfax ticket in New York State, Butler wired in reply:

When I made that promise I did not know that the representative Republicans as Mr. Dana claims in his speech would encourage him to run against me in my district. Send me telegram from the National Committee to contradict Mr. Dana and I will come and speak any time for the good cause. Otherwise must stay at home and fight the enemies of the party here.³²

Chandler was in an embarrassing position. He had remonstrated unsuccessfully with other members of the National Committee against the Kilpatrick raid. He tried to convince Butler of his personal loyalty:

"I differ from you financially," he wrote, "but you have always been my personal friend, and I heartily wish you that success which you are about to achieve, the failure of which would cause a howl of delight among the Rebels of the South, which gratification we cannot yet afford to give them."³³

Chandler was also convinced that, since Butler was sure to be re-elected, the national Republican leaders could not afford to bring their opposition to him out into the open and it would be impolitic to have Grant's name authoritatively used against the Essex candidate. Essex voters' verdict at the polls --13,080 votes for Butler and 1,060 for Dana--confirmed Chandler's opinion. Writing Washburne after the election, he said:

³²Butler to Chandler, October undated, 1868, in Butler MSS.

³³Chandler to Butler, October 21, 1868, in Butler MSS.

After seeing the result in Butler's district I think you will cordially assent to the propriety of my course. The testimony was overwhelming that Butler would be triumphantly elected. And to have the weight of General Grant's name used in aid of a miserable failure of an attempt to kill him would have been a mistake. Butler only understands that Kilpatrick's raid upon him was a mercenary speculation of his own unauthorized by anyone and countenanced by no friend of General Grant. And I mean he shall continue to think so. Butler is an uncertain man and may make mischief in the future. But he managed his canvass admirably and the result would have been the same in any district in New England; or if submitted to the popular vote of the whole of New England. They forgot his financial heresies, admired his ability & pluck, and looked upon the attempt to defeat him as an act of conservative flunkeyism not to be tolerated. And I guess Genl. Grant's administration and the Republican party will be strong enough to survive even Butler if he attacks them. It's by free discussion by all sorts of people that we get the truth in America.³⁴

Not by any "free discussion" from Grant's friends was Butler to learn the full details of the attempt that had been made to double-cross him while he, up to the finish of the canvass, was putting forth his most energetic efforts for the Grant-Colfax ticket on the stump.³⁵

³⁴Chandler to Washburne, November 7, 1868, in Washburne MSS, Vol. LXI.

³⁵In January, 1869, Butler while aware of the Lander-Vickers mission to Galena apparently thought Grant had not approved the Kilpatrick campaign against him and that Kilpatrick invaded his district over the protest of the chairman and the secretary of the Republican National Committee. Kilpatrick had denied allegations that he was paid for the Essex campaigning, insisting "he did not receive one cent, but paid out of his own pocket almost \$300." But Lander as paymaster of the Dana forces in this instance insisted the general received a thousand dollars for his raid.--Butler to Watson Ambruster, editor Philadelphia Telegraph, January 25, 1869; Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, January 23, 1869; Lander's deposition in Butler MSS.

CHAPTER XX

FRUITS OF VICTORY

Butler's victory was echoed in Washington with firing of a salute of fifty-two guns by the Butler Zouaves, a negro political organization.¹ To his home in Lowell marched the Tanners in torchlight procession, to serenade him with fifes and drums and with songs by the Grant Glee Club. Responding to their music and huzzaing, he made a brief speech declaring the national Republican victory would bring peace and prosperity and if the party were "true to the great democratic principles of Jefferson and others it will hold the Government for a generation to come."² A dissenter disturbed the amenities by heaving a rock at the General. Instead of hitting Butler it knocked an aged bystander senseless. He was hustled into the house for resuscitation and the General promptly posted a reward of \$200 for detection of the stone-thrower.³

The victory was decisive enough to deter editorial stone-throwers, though the intransigent Boston Advertiser clung to its view that the election result was "disgraceful and deplorable"⁴ and its Washington correspondent recorded that the General's re-election "affords much comfort to the Democrats" and "the chief speakers at their meeting last night said that the thanks of the Democracy should be given to the Republicans of Butler's district for re-electing him."⁵ Raymond let it be known that the New York Times' opposition had been unauthorized by him, during his absence

¹Washington correspondence of Boston Journal, November 7, 1868.

²Lowell correspondence of New York Times, November 6, 1868.

³Lowell Citizen and News, November 5, 1868.

⁴Boston Advertiser, November 4, 1868.

⁵Ibid., November 5, 1868.

in Europe.⁶ Greeley's Tribune opined that the "hearty emphatic good will" in which General Butler was "regarded by the great mass of the loyal upholders of our country's integrity in her late struggle" rested on "very intelligible grounds." But it took occasion to lecture him for the personal style of his campaign and hoped he would abandon his money heresies.⁷ Butler in a letter to the Tribune denied Greeley's imputations that he had ascribed a mean animus to all who opposed him. "I only met with personal motives those who assailed me, from such motives, with personal abuse and slander," he retorted and recapitulated some of the "slander" employed against him. He could not see his way to "repent" on the money question, he declared.⁸

To Greeley's managing editor, Young, Butler wrote:

Many thanks for your kindness and hearty sympathy in the fight I have had with conservatism (God forgive the Radicals who have turned against me!) It is but the beginning of the end of a battle which is now to be fought out on a higher field by other combatants in which you are to take your share and Mr. Greeley his.

Greeley had misunderstood his "aim and object," he complained, but he believed Greeley "to be a just and upright man looking to the good of the country."⁹

A fuller assay by the General of the significance of the election was presented in a New York Herald interview. He looked to see the Grant administration "radical upon all points raised and settled by the war, but conservative upon finance," he said. Opportunity for Western Democrats to express their soft money views had been stifled, he held, through national management of the party by August Belmont and the hard money crowd in New York,

⁶George Butler to Butler, January 18, 1868, in Butler MSS.

⁷November 6, 1868.

⁸Ibid., November 17, 1868. From Blaine's household Abigail Dodge penned a spinsterly rebuke for his campaign methods: "I shall not allow you, little Benjie, to draw your coat sleeve across your eyes and plead that the other boy hit you first. That is nothing to the purpose. It is lawful and expedient often to fight fire with fire, but is neither to fight mire with mire because it is not the mud flung at us which assoils us but the mud we fling. . . . You have so much ability that you can do more than a dozen common men to lower the tone of political discussion" (Mary A. Dodge to Butler, January 16, 1869, in Butler MSS).

⁹Butler to Young, November 12, 1868, in John Russell Young MSS (Library of Congress), VI, 1392.

who had preferred to revive war issues. And by revival of the war issues they had really reinforced demand for the Grant administration to assume a strong Radical position on the questions of reconstruction. Louisiana and other Southern States had been lost to the Republicans by intimidation of voters, Butler maintained.

The contracts everywhere made in the South for the employment of negroes on the condition that they will abstain from voting if their masters so desired, are as much purchases of men as were the purchases from the auction block a few years before. No member of Congress elected in any district where such means were used will ever be admitted to his seat by my consent or any electoral vote from such districts counted.

Congress would have to assume a strong position to remedy the Southern conditions.¹⁰

Serenaded on his return to Washington by the Butler Zouaves, the General gave the dusky demonstrators assurance that the election would mean an enforced peace at the South and that homes of negroes would be safe and "your power equal to that of other men."¹¹

The business of paying off campaign scores was not long neglected. Lander, who had been an official in the Dana campaign organization, lost his Salem postmastership on charges of "defalcation and tampering with letters." The dashing cavalry general, Kilpatrick, who had made the raid into Butler's district, soon found himself threatened by a counter-raid. Butler proposed a consolidation of diplomatic missions in South and Central America that would have thrown the minister to Chili out of his \$9,000 job. Economy was the motive Butler urged; his proposal would save \$73,000 a year.¹³ But "to recall an unworthy and incompetent officer who has disgraced the nation abroad both morally and socially would not be an objection to the scheme," he held.¹⁴ However, his consolidation project was defeated.¹⁵

¹⁰New York Herald, November 17, 1868.

¹¹Lowell Citizen and News, December 7, 1868.

¹²Butler to Watson Ambruster, January 25, 1869, in Butler MSS.

¹³Globe, 40th Cong., 3d Sess., pp. 221, 1559.

¹⁴Butler to George A. Squier, January 9, 1869, in Butler MSS.

¹⁵Globe, 40th Cong. 3d Sess., pp. 1562, 1814.

Butler had to wait longer to take his revenge on Dana. In 1876 he successfully pulled wires to have the Senate defeat confirmation of his nomination to be minister to England, prejudicing him by recirculating the charge, raised in the 1868 campaign, that Dana had pirated some notes of an edition of Wheaton's treatise on international law.¹⁶

The election left Butler's relationship to Grant in a state of dubious uncertainty. The Essex member was conveniently absent from Lowell when Grant made a visit there in December.¹⁷ It was Grant now who apparently decided to renew the overtures for reconciliation. "I may mention as a piece of news but not for the newspapers," Butler wrote Sherman on Christmas day, "that General Grant left his card with me today by his private secretary."¹⁸ A week later Butler was making his surprising New Year's call on Johnson, which the latter's friends interpreted as an indirect thrust at Grant.¹⁹ Soon after the inauguration it appears that the President-elect and the Essex Congressman came together for an understanding--though, so far as Butler was concerned, it probably hardly involved an understanding of Grant's part in trying to prevent his re-election. "I called at the White House and was very cordially received," Butler relates in his autobiography.

We sat down together and went over our whole past relations. I soon learned what had been impressed upon his mind as to my feelings toward him by those around him, some of whom he had discovered not to be honorable and unselfish men he had believed them. He asked if our former kindly relations might not be restored. I said to him that under his explanations I certainly felt greatly relieved, and I hoped that might be the case, and would be glad that it should be so. . . . From that time until the day of his death no word of unkind difference passed between us; and I can say without fear of contradiction, that few men possessed a greater share of his confidence, or had more personal influence upon public questions than I had.²⁰

¹⁶New York Tribune, April 6, 1876; Rutherford B. Hayes, Diary and Letters, edited by Charles Richard (Columbus, 1922-26), III, 318.

¹⁷Lowell Citizen and News, December 4, 1868.

¹⁸Butler to E. J. Sherman, December 25, 1868, in Butler MSS.

¹⁹Supra, Chapter XVI, pp. 189-97. (See the complete dissertation, on file in the University of Chicago Libraries.)

²⁰Butler, Butler's Book, pp. 854-55. In Butler's account,

The latter was hardly a mere vainglorious boast, for others acknowledged the influence Butler came to wield with the Grant administration.²¹ By force of his own initiative Butler had forged to the front in Congress and succeeded to the place of Stevens as chairman of the Reconstruction committee. But that preferment and other advances in his congressional career could have been blocked at a suggestion from the President to the party leaders.

Butler with the advent of Grant stood on the threshold of his period of strongest party influence. He was to become the virtual master of patronage in Massachusetts and, to a considerable extent, in New York as well. Butler's star rose especially after Sumner's began to decline, and the Hoars and other prominent figures in Massachusetts politics found themselves shouldered aside at Washington by the ambitious Essex member, though they were steadily able for more than a decade to prevent him from realizing what became his mastering desire, to be elected Governor of Massachusetts.

Mystery has been ascribed to reasons for the hold Butler is supposed to have had on the President. By the jealous General

written nearly a quarter century after the event, this reconciliation is recorded as if it had occurred immediately after the abortive mediations of Wilkes the previous Summer. Wilkes' efforts probably at least broke the ice, and he claimed for himself credit for the reconciliation and was clamorously disappointed, his letters to Butler showed, when Grant did not give him an appointment as minister to Mexico, which he thought he deserved for his services as a conciliator. Butler favored the appointment. He and Wilkes were interested in a development company having holdings in Lower California (George Butler to Butler, January 25, 1869; S. S. M. Barlow to Butler, March 12, 1869; Wilkes to Butler, March 21, 1869; in Butler MSS). "I have done more for him [Grant] than all others from this State [New York] put together," Wilkes finally complained when the appointment did not materialize, "by that sole act which prevented the nomination of Chase through your reconciliation. That was the deciding stroke which made him President; and I can prove it ten times over. He seems to have settled to the notion that I am dead; and my object is to rouse him in some casual way to the fact that he has yet to deal with me" (Wilkes to Butler, April 12, 1870, in Butler MSS).

²¹James Ford Rhodes, History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850 (New York: Macmillan Co., 1910-19), VI, 389; Edward L. Pierce, Memoir and Letters of Charles Sumner (Boston: Roberts Bros., 1877-93), IV, 498; George Frisbie Hoar, Autobiography of Seventy Years (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1903), I, 361.

"Baldy" Smith was begun the legend that this influence dated back to war times when Butler was alleged to have taken advantage of Grant's weakness for strong drink.²² Hoar, who scouted such a charge, thought Butler maintained his influence by convincing the President he was politically powerful in his State and section. Furthermore he suggests Grant was apt "to sympathize with men who were bitterly attacked, especially men who were charged with dishonesty or corruption, because such charges were made against him."²³ The fact was that Butler generally proved a reliable defender of administration measures and positions, even when they were of a character to draw considerable fire from critics. As a staunch supporter, he earned the President's reciprocal support for his own measures and schemes, some of which did not inure to the fame and credit of the administration.

Under a different sort of executive, Butler's style might have been seriously cramped. Removal of presidential favor when Hayes came into power helped him lose taste for further membership in Congress, and he voluntarily retired in 1878 to concentrate on winning the Massachusetts governorship. His single term as State executive, finally gained in 1883, failed to convince Bay State voters that he should be given a second term. His bizarre canvass as presidential candidate of the Greenback party in 1884 rang down the curtain on his public career.

Five terms in Congress and one in the governorship left his ambitions in public life unsatiated. He had dreamed of higher goals. Many had loyally believed him worthy of them. But of this the nation at large became less and less convinced as his career in Congress progressed. Butler was in many senses a representative figure and product of the period. More audacious and of keener intellect than most of his colleagues, he failed to rise above them because he was too prominently identified in the public mind as a protagonist of measures and methods that became a serious incubus for the Grant administration and for the Republican party. In this Butler may have been more a scapegoat than he de-

²²W. F. Smith, From Chattanooga to Petersburg (Boston, 1893), pp. 52, 174, 178; Clarence E. MacCartney, Lincoln and His Generals (Philadelphia, 1925), p. 61. Butler spiritedly denies General Smith's account of an incident on which he based his insinuations (Butler, Butler's Book, p. 698).

²³Hoar, op. cit., I, 362.

served, when his activities are compared with those of some other contemporary politicians who, being less colorful and conspicuous, escaped with less notoriety. To a great extent, however, the General could blame himself for not scaling loftier heights. Steadier discrimination in measuring moral values would have been a useful adjunct. Without it his brilliant intellect and undoubted powers of mass appeal did not propel him upward on the road of political preferment beyond a certain dead level, where he plugged along, handicapped by lack of sufficient public confidence. For not enough of his contemporaries were willing to subscribe to Butler's self-flattering assertion, "I have done nothing but good and that continually."²⁴

²⁴Butler to Edward L. Pierce, August 15, 1861, Butler, Private and Official Correspondence during the Period of the Civil War, ed. Mrs. Jessie Ames Marshall (Norwood, Mass., 1917), I, 216.

